NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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DE LA CAL/LISBON

PORTUGAL ELECTION PREVIEW

ANNCR:

MARTHA DE LA CAL IN LISBON HAS THIS REPORT ON THE COMING NINETEEN SEVENTY-SIX ELECTIONS IN PORTUGAL:

VOICE:

FOURTEEN POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE PRESENTED LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR PORTUGAL'S FIRST FREELY-ELECTED NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN FIFTY YEARS. THE ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD APRIL TWENTY-FIFTH, THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMED FORCES REVOLUTION. TWO HUNDRED FIFTY DEPUTIES WILL BE ELECTED TO THE NEWLY DESIGNATED ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC.

FOUR PARTIES ARE EXPECTED TO WIN THE LION'S SHARE OF THE VOTE: THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS, THE SOCIALISTS, THE CONSERVATIVE CENTER SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND THE COMMUNISTS. THE SOCIALISTS WON LAST YEAR'S ELECTION FOR THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WITH THIRTY-SEVEN PERCENT OF THE VOTE, FOLLOWED BY THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS WITH TWENTY-SIX, THE COMMUNISTS WITH TWELVE AND A HALF, AND THE CENTER SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WITH SEVEN POINT SIX.

THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, MANY OBSERVERS ARE PREDICTING A SWING TO THE RIGHT, WHICH COULD MEAN A VICTORY FOR THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS AND A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE CONSERVATIVE VOTE. THEY POINT TO THE WIDESPREAD DISCONTENT AMONG THE LARGE RURAL POPULATION IN THE NORTH, WHERE THE SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST-SUPPORTED AGRARIAN REFORM HAS MET SERIOUS OPPOSITION. THE COUNTRY NORTH OF LISBON, WHICH HAS NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF PORTUGAL'S MORE THAN SIX MILLION

VOTERS, IS ALSO STAUNCHLY CATHOLIC AND IS PROVING QUITE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOR THIS YEAR WILL BE THE VOTE OF THE REFUGEES FROM PORTUGAL'S FORMER AFRICAN TERRITORIES. THE REFUGEES ARE STRONGLY AGAINT PORTUGAL'S LEFT WING PARTIES WHOM THEY BLAME FOR THEIR MISFORTUNE. PORTUGAL'S ECONOMIC PLIGHT WILL BE ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH COULD TURN THE VOTE TO THE RIGHT.

THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE ALREADY STARTED CAMPAIGNING, EVEN THOUGH THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN IS NOT UNTIL APRIL FIFTH. THE SOCIALISTS ARE STILL CONFIDENT OF VICTORY ADVOCATING SOCIALISM WITH DEMOCRACY. THEY SAY THEY WANT AN ALLIANCE WITH EUROPE AND THE WEST, AND IF THEY WIN THE ELECTION, THEY WILL GOVERN ALONE WITHOUT A COALITION. THE COMMUNISTS ARE CALLING FOR ALL OF THE LEFT TO JOIN A COMMON FRONT. THEY CLAIM THEY COULD GET A MILLION VOTES. THEIR PLATFORM SUPPORTS AGRARIAN REFORM, NATIONALIZATION, AND WORKER CONTROL OF FACTORIES. THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS SAY THAT WHAT THEY WANT FOR PORTUGAL IS A SOCIAL DEMOCRACY SIMILAR TO THAT IN SWEDEN. THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS SAY THAT THEY WILL BE WILLING TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT IF THEY WIN. THE CONSERVATIVE CENTER SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ARE STRESSING THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE NOT PARTICIPATED IN ANY OF THE GOVERNMENTS SINCE THE REVOLUTION. THEREFORE, THEY SAY, THEY ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PRESENT SITUATION. THEIR PLATFORM IS BASED ON A FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM, AND THEY ARE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF AGRARIAN REFORM. THE CENTER SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE GAINED STRENGTH IN THE NORTH OF THE COUNTRY AND IN THE AZORES ISLANDS AND MADEIRA WHERE LEFTIST PARTIES HAVE VIRTUALLY HAD TO GO UNDERGROUND.

IF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTIES ARE ELECTED, THEY COULD FIND THEMSELVES IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO PUT INTO EFFECT A LEFT WING CONSTITUTION. THE CONSTITUTION WHICH IS BEING WRITTEN BY THE ASSEMBLY ELECTED LAST APRIL IS A RADICAL DOCUMENT BY WESTERN STANDARDS. AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT PROVIDES FOR WORKER CONTROL OF FACTORIES AND NO PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

AS THE ELECTIONS APPROACH, THERE IS GROWING LABOR UNREST. GOVERNMENT LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED FEAR THAT IT IS AN ATTEMPT BY THE LEFT TO DESTABILIZE THE COUNTRY AND PREVENT THE ELECTIONS. THE ARMED FORCES HAVE PLEDGED TO SEE THAT THE ELECTIONS ARE HELD EVEN IF IT MEANS USING THE POLICE AND THE MILITARY TO ENFORCE ORDER.

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